

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5914

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 307

NODIS CHEROKEE

FOR SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PFOR, SY, UNSC

SUBJ: ASAD RE-THINKING SC DEBATE

REF: A. DAMASCUS 233, B. STATE 9807; C. DAMASCUS 186

1. SOURCE RETURNED JANUARY 20 TO REPORT HE HAD MET BRIEFLY WITH PRESIDENT JANUARY 16 AND EXPECTS MORE EXTENDED MEETING IN COURSE OF COMING WEEK. HE FOUND ASAD CLEARER IN DEFINING SYRIA'S EXPECTATION FROM SC DEBATE, AND IN MORE RELAXED FRAME OF MIND THAN DURING THEIR JANUARY 8 MEETING.

2. SOURCE TOLD PRESIDENT HE HOPED ASAD RECOGNIZED THERE ARE DEFINITE LIMITS TO THE AMERICAN POSITION. ASAD RESPONDED THAT HE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT AMERICAN STAND. (MY LAST MEETING WITH ASAD HAD BEEN JANUARY 10.) ASAD VOLUNTEERED THAT HE CONVINCED SYRIA COULD EXPECT LITTLE TANGIBLE PROGRESS FOR PALESTINIAN CAUSE DURING AMERICAN ELECTION YEAR AND ADDED HE DID NOT RPT DID NOT WANT AMERICAN VETO TO BE END RESULT OF SC DEBATE. HE REITERATED HE WAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING POSTPONING ISSUE, FOR AWHILE, THROUGH ADJOURNING THE DEBATE, IF HE FACED PROSPECT OF AMERICAN VETO. HE DID NOT GO SO FAR, HOWEVER, TO SAY HE HAD DECIDED

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SYRIAN AND US COULD NOT AGREE ON SOME TYPE OF

RESOLUTION.

3. SOURCE SAID HE HAD REFERRED TO POSSIBLE SOVIET MANIPULATION OF SYRIA IN STAGING OF DEBATE, AND PRESIDENT EMPHASIZED THAT HE WOULD NOT LET SYRIA BE USED FOR SOVIET PURPOSES AT SC OR ANYWHERE ELSE.

4. SOURCE COMMENTED THAT LEBANESE CRISIS MAY ENABLE ASAD TO DOWNPLAY SIGNIFICANCE OF SC DEBATE. NOTED THAT MEMBERS OF BAATH REGIONAL COMMAND, WITH WHOM SOURCE HAD BEEN IN CONTACT JANUARY 19, HAD TOTALLY IGNORED SC PROCEEDINGS AND HAD BEEN OBSESSED WITH PROSPECT OF WAVES OF LEBANESE REFUGEES FLEEING TO SYRIA FROM PRESENT CRISIS.

5. COMMENT: I BELIEVE SOURCE IS REPORTING ACCURATELY HIS MEETING WITH PRESIDENT. HE HAS ACCESS TO ASAD WHO, HE CLAIMS, APPRECIATES THAT SOURCE BRINGS "INDEPENDENT" THINKING INTO WHAT IS AN INCREASINGLY CLOSED CIRCLE OF "YES MEN" AROUND THE PRESIDENT WHO NEVER CHALLENGE THEIR LEADER. HAVE ASKED HIM TO CONTACT ME BEFORE HIS NEXT SESSION WITH ASAD TO COMPARE NOTES ON INTERIM DEVELOPMENTS IN NEW YORK. MURPHY

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